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ABSTRACT

Inclusion of students with disabilities, especially those with mental retardation, has come to mean the placement of all students in general education classrooms, sometimes with limited planning for the individual needs of each student. Several court cases, laws, and movements have brought about the level of inclusion that exists today. However, schools are now evolving from inclusion to integration, which involves the planned placement of students in a setting. Two circuit court cases with implications for integration include Holland versus the Board of Sacramento City Unified School District, in which four components were outlined for determining the removal of a student from general education and the Oberti case, which stated that students with disabilities should be placed in general education classes with appropriate support. The four components of the Holland case provide a framework for examining what is effective in integrating students; components include educational benefits, non-academic benefits, effect on teacher and children in the regular classroom, and cost. A case-by-case approach to integrating students into general education is needed. The established best practices of the field of mental retardation should follow students no matter where they are placed, and ongoing monitoring of student progress should occur. (Contains 45 references.) (JDD)

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The Integration of Students with Mental Retardation into General Education Classrooms

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A presentation at the International Council for Exceptional Children Convention in Denver Colorado on April 7, 1994

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Abstract

This paper discusses the integration of students with mental retardation into general education classrooms. A distinction is drawn between integration and inclusion of students. An historical perspective of how the field arrived at the point of full inclusion, indicators of a step back to the planned individual placement of students and what works in integrated/inclusionary settings are present. Beyond the emphasis on the need for planning during the placement processes, the author points out the need for monitoring more than issues related to social integration and the fact that the literature reflects a limited number of approaches which help students with mental retardation succeed in general education classrooms.

The Integration of Students with Mental Retardation into General Education Classrooms

It is difficult in 1994 to use integration as part of a title of a discussion of the placement of students with mental retardation. Inclusion is the word that has taken on what integration or mainstreaming once meant. The problem is that in a number of cases inclusion and especially full inclusion in practice has come to mean the placement of all students in general education classrooms. At times this has been meant as the fulfillment of a philosophy that all students should be educated in the same classroom. And at times students have been moved in mass from settings that were other than the general education classroom with limited or little planning for the individual needs of each student. For the purpose of this paper, inclusion will be discussed from that standpoint. The use of the word integration will then mean the planned placement of students in a setting.

The objectives of this discussion are: 1) to provide some orientation as to where we come from in the placement of students with mental retardation; 2) to provide some of the current future directions inclusion & integration are heading; and 3) talk about what works. This will be done by sharing literature, research and court decisions which relate to the discussion.

How We Got Where We are Today

Prior to 1975 we had inclusion of students with disabilities, although this inclusion varied significantly from school to school and district to district. It often resulted in the physical inclusion and the social segregation of students and in most cases resulted in the inadequate education of students with mental retardation. However, when students with mental retardation presented problems to the system they were often excluded from public schools altogether. In reality, this form of inclusion was not effective and in the 1960's parents starting taking school districts to court over a variety of issues including appropriate placement, expulsion, and lack of individual planning. In 1972 there were six major cases decided at the Federal Court level which held that students within those Federal Districts, at a minimum were to receive a free and appropriate education around or with their peers. The PARC (334 F. Supp. at 1260) and the Mills (348 F. Supp. 866) cases stated that there was a presumption alternative programs of education were available. In PARC the court stated, ". . . placement in a regular public school class is preferable to placement in a special public school class. . ." In the Mills case the court stated, " . . . placement in regular public school class with appropriate ancillary services is preferable to placement in a special school class."

Congress did not like courts legislating and decided to take action. In 1973 Congress passed Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and in 1975 passed the Education for All Handicapped Act.

Hairston v. Drosick (423 F. Supp. 180, 183)(1976) was one of the first tests of section 504 and in that case the court held that ". . . needless exclusion of these children and other children who are able to function adequately from the regular classroom situation would be a great disservice to those children. . . It is therefore imperative that every child receive an education with his or her peers insofar as it is at all possible. . ."

The passage of The Education of All Handicapped Act (PL 94-142) in 1975 made a seemingly clear statement concerning an appropriate education and the placement of students with handicaps in the least restrictive environment. Although this clause has been debated at length, in the 1990 re-authorization we find the same language.

IDEA provides that each state must establish: [P]rocedures to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily . . . 20 U.S.C. (5)(B).

The court in its first examination of the Education of All Handicapped Act found that "[t]he act requires participating states to educate handicapped children with non-handicapped children whenever possible." This was the Rowley case (458 U.S. at 202). The Rowley decision also weakened the appropriate education statement of 94-142 and inserted the word *adequate* in place of *appropriate*, thus making it easier to place and serve students in integrated settings at least in the eyes of many school districts.

The field of mental retardation gradually developed practices and approaches which were shown to be effective. As effective practices were identified through implementation in the classroom a set of best practices emerged which reached a level of consensus among professionals. The work of Bates, Renzaglia & Wehman, 1981; Hilton , Faught and Hagen, 1984; Snell 1988(a); Williams, Fox, Thousand, & Fox (1990). and others established practices such as integrated therapy, individual programming, appropriate curriculum and others as critical for students with mental retardation.

When PL 94-142 was passed in 1975 special education held that the best thing for most students with disabilities what to provide them with specialized education for at least part of their day in a special education classroom. The use of resources rooms and

special education classrooms with specially trained teachers seemed to be the best way to serve students with disabilities.

However this manner of service began to be questioned from a number of different directions. For example, Jenkins et al., (1988) pointed out that categorical programs do not divide students according to their instructional level and this causes the fragmentation of services. Marston (1987) pointed out special education teachers were teaching groups of students other than those they were trained to teach. In retrospect, for many students pull out and self-contained classrooms did not do the job. Beyond this many viewed special education as being not cost effective and a drain of resources (Jenkins, Pious & Peterson., 1988). Special education did not prove it could make changes in the performance or self-concept of students it served. Let me point out that the results were quite mixed and we still do not have a clear answer concerning how effective Special Education is.

Several movements or initiatives surfaced which clearly have impacted special education. These include the Regular Education Initiative, Inclusive Schools Movement, and School Restructuring Movement. We need to review these and gain the perspective of how they have had different purposes and goals. Each of these has meant different things to different people

Since the Regular Education Initiative was the first special education initiated proposal for change it seems a logical place to start. The REI, however, is not a single movement but two. Much of the initial discussion had implications to the high-incidence population (LD, Mild BD, Mild/Mod MR). Discussions from Jenkins, et al., (1988), Reynolds (1988; 1989), Lilly (1987); and Will (1986) for example, advocated; improving and strengthening general education. Will (1986) ably pointed out that special education segregated and stigmatized students who could be effectively served in traditional educational settings. The secondary and in some cases primary agenda here was to address the needs of the at risk population.

The second part of the REI was integration of students with severe disabilities into neighborhood schools. It was a push for integration but not clearly mainstreaming. Snell (1988 b) Biklen (1985), the Stainbacks (1985) and others led this charge.

More currently the Inclusive Schools Movement has taken the forefront and the involvement of many of those who had earlier backed the REI efforts. The concept here was that all students would be included in general education classrooms. The inclusive school movement has based this on social integration, societal change (non-disabled attitudes, etc.), growth of friendships and the abolition of special education. Social integration has four components which include physical integration, social integration,

relationships and networks as Storey (1993) pointed out. Odom & McEvoy (1989), Haring, (1991) and Strain (1990) have noted that there is little evidence that these benefits actually occur from inclusion but the movement has gathered strength over the past five years. Even Jenkins et al., (1991) in reporting a study of a restructured school compared to a traditionally structured school told us the introductory practices including cross-age tutoring and cooperative learning into a school does not automatically result in improved achievement. He also noted how disconcerting it was to staff when such efforts do not make a difference. But the inclusion movement has pushed ahead. This movement has been led by The Association for the Severely Handicapped (TASH) and independent acting TASH members, including the Stainbacks, Snell and Bilken.

REI and Inclusive Schools Movements differ from the standpoint that the REI did not attempt to abolish special education. The two are parallel in the fact that both sought or seek to improve general education to handle students with disabilities. The other way these two movements are similar is that they were and are special education initiatives which have to a great extent ignored general education.

Educational Restructuring is the final movement that has taken place during this same time period. Restructuring has two components like the REI but here the division has been between special education and general. The special education portion has looked at and pressed for the merger of general education and special education. Like the Inclusive Schools Movement no case-by-case placement of students with disabilities is included with this approach. Its focus has been on increased academic achievement, learning for all, and individualization as opposed to friendship building and social change. Reynolds, Wang and Walberg, (1987) along with others have spearheaded this part of the restructuring. Bricker (1978) pointed out that the proponents of integration rely upon three rationales to justify mainstreaming and these hold for inclusion. These are (1) the legal requirements for placement in the least restrictive environment; (2) it's the right thing to do; and (3) students with disabilities receive additional educational or developmental benefits from being in close proximity to students who do not have disabilities.

The other part of the restructuring movement has come from general education and primarily ignored special education. The excellence movement which was started by the Carnegie Foundation studies, the Holmes Group and the National Commission on Excellence have brought about many of these changes. One of the major changes that impacts this discussion is the outcome of building based management which leads to the principal as a major decision maker concerning services and practices and

parent/site councils for each school which provide input. (for an excellent summary of the reform movement read Fuchs and Fuchs (1994)

Where Are We Headed?

Yes we have been brought into the inclusion movement. Schools & districts are moving to inclusion at breakneck speed. But there are indications that we are evolving away from inclusion toward integration of students. This conclusion can be drawn from research & professional literature and several court decisions. Some of these indicators are as follows.

Research and Literature

Larrivee & Horne (1991) found in a relatively large study that for elementary school students low peer acceptance of integrated students was determined not by their disability status but rather by their low-achieving status.

Hilton and Liberty (1992) found in a study of a large urban cooperative in the Northwest that students were integrated into less restrictive settings but were not receiving an appropriate education in the integrated settings. They proposed a two-pronged test be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the integration of students with severe disabilities. This test consists of an analysis of whether the integrated students have been provided/facilitated opportunities to interact with students with less- or no disability. The second part of the test is to determine whether students are making progress toward meeting their well written IEP goals and objectives.

Smith and Hilton (1994) restated and expanded on the MRDD board's (of the Council for Exceptional Children) position of April 15, 1992 on program design for students with disabilities. In this article the authors made it clear that educational programs for students with mental retardation should reflect the educational needs of the individual student with disabilities. The article further stated the board's position that students should be educated in the least restrictive environment which is the environment which "best allows the individual student to prosper to the maximum degree." (p. 8)

Jenkins, et al., (1994) has pointed out that even with additional support in general education classrooms and cross class and cross-grade groups, that intense supplemental assistance over and above the classroom reading programs had to be employed to handle a percentage of the students in his study. Others studies such as Pinnell (1989) and Slavin et al., (1990) found that some form of specialized approach was necessary to deal with failure of some students when the general education program was followed entirely. Along the same line Cole, et al., in a 1991 study that covered a four year

period, found that lower functioning pre-school children made greater gains in language, social and academic tasks in segregated settings than in integrated settings.

Bullock, Ellis, and Wilson (1994) made the following statement ". . . there will continue to be a need for teachers with specialized preparation to work with students with E/BD in more restrictive settings." (p.124) Earlier Bratten et al., (1988) took the stand that students with behavior disorders need a full continuum of services and that interventions must be available for students with behavior disorders. Although they were not referring to students with mental retardation or developmental disabilities, again this is a recognition that not all students can be served all the time in inclusive classrooms.

In a 1992 article Fuchs, Fuchs & Fernstrom made a strong case for responsible mainstreaming of students with learning disabilities. They called for the case by case re-integration of students with disabilities. They described an approach which ". . . makes explicit that the transition process is tailored to the needs of individual the child and that periodic evaluations will be conducted to determine short- and long-term effects of change in educational placement." (p.279)

Not much attention has been paid to the issues of cost in inclusion. Although many of my colleagues have contended for some time that integration of students with disabilities and specifically those who have mental retardation will not be less expensive. Others have contended that it would amount to major cost saving. Jenkins, et al., (1994) in his recent article concerning accommodations for individual differences did give us some indications concerning costs of inclusion. They stated that to provide the level of service intensity that students at risk for failure - those from poor families and those with disabilities will need to succeed ". . .will require substantially more resources than are currently available in our system of public education." (p. 357) If this is true, and there is little doubt concerning the validity of this study and conclusion, then the administrators who have for the most part been avid supporters of inclusion, may soon be taking another stand on the issue as will many of those who pushed for the elimination of special education based on the issue of wasting resources.

Finally the Council for Exceptional Children in 1993 has taken the stand that there needs to be a full continuum of services for students with disabilities. Further, that wherever students are served that their need to for specially trained personnel and other appropriate supportive practices according to the individual needs of the child must be met.

The Courts

There two recent Federal court cases which have some significance on where we are going. These are the Holland case (786 F. Supp at 884) from the 3rd Circuit Court and the Oberti case (789 F. Supp. at 1332) from the 9th Circuit.

The Holland v. the Board of Sacramento City Unified School District involved the school district's attempt to place Rachel Holland an 11-year-old student with moderate mental retardation (IQ 44) in a special education classroom. The district held that Rachel was too severely disabled to learn in a regular classroom while her parents claimed she best learned social & academic skills in the regular classroom. The parents had placed Rachel in a private kindergarten and this continued through the second grade while the case continued. The hearing officer ordered regular education--full time with support services. The district appealed

In deciding for the parents the district court established a four-year test to evaluate the removal of a student from general education. Let me share the components with you:

1. Educational Benefits - IEP goals can be implemented with some modifications/assistance & support
2. Non-Academic Benefits: Social & Communication gains + self confidence can be made
3. Effect on Teacher & Children in the Regular Classroom
   A) detrimental effect on others
   B) require undue teacher time which damages other students
4. Cost: District has to prove that there is significantly more cost

This was upheld by the 9th Circuit Court and probably will not go to the Supreme Court. But this opinion seems to provide guidelines for the evaluation of individual placements of students in general education settings. It combines standards put forward in the Daniel R.R. (874 F 2d 1036) & Greer (950 F. 2d 1036) cases. But it makes a clear statement about what can be considered in placement of a student. The other side of the coin provides a rationale for placement other than the general education classroom for some students.

The Oberti case, which is going to the U.S. Supreme Court, is quite similar to the Holland Case which again concerned a student with mental retardation. Rafael Oberti was born with Down Syndrome, has developmental disabilities and a communication impairment. He attended special education pre-school and when the IEP was drawn up the summer before entering school, the district proposed a self-contained special education class in another school. A compromise was reached for half day

developmental kindergarten in the district. For the first grade he was placed in a class for multiple handicaps in a neighboring district. By December of that year the parents were dissatisfied and asked for a hearing. Hearing Officer found for the district. Parents went to Federal District Court and after a full trial the court found for the parents and ordered an integrated placement. District went on appeal to the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals which affirmed the District court and the school district is taking the case to the Supreme Court.

Rafael had a number of serious behavior problems in the regular kindergarten including temper tantrums, toileting accidents, touching, hitting and spitting on other children and hitting the teacher and instructional assistant. No assistance or modifications were made except to give the parents suggestions. On these facts the district decided Rafael could benefit from general education settings. The trial court felt that with in-class support, teaching modifications and the like Rafael could benefit from the case.

Although this case clearly supports most of the efforts of the inclusion movement there was a discussion of inclusion in the text of the case and this is important to our topic today. The court took the stand that inclusion had little basis in the law and the term needed to be LRE or mainstreaming which have extensive grounding in the law. Inclusion does not need to be regular class placement unaided. Using the LRE provisions there is a full continuum of support available for individual students based upon the student's needs. This then, like the Holland case, says that students with disabilities and in this case with mental retardation should be placed in general education classes with appropriate support based upon their individual needs. The court looked long and hard at whether there were indications that Rafael could succeed in an integrated classroom. The court also applied the reasonableness test which was mentioned as one of the components of the Holland case above. That is, that the modification should not be unduly expensive, or change the curriculum beyond recognition or result in the youngster not really interacting with other students in the classroom. This again is a step away from total inclusion of all students as a movement and a step toward case-by-case placement.

Implications of the Literature and Court Decisions

Individually these statements mean little. But all of these taken together form a picture of a trend that is building or what we might call the pendulum swing back away from full inclusion to integration.

So What Works?

In reviewing promising and effective practices two aspects were apparent. First, the practices are not large in number and second, those practices reported are extremely limited in support from the literature-let alone from research. The framework found in the Holland Case discussed above provides an excellent standard for examination of what is effective in the integration of students with mental retardation. The components outlined include academic gain, social/friendship gains, disruptions to the classroom and the cost.

Academic Gain

Hilton & Liberty (1991) have pointed out the need for evaluating the gains made in both academic and social placement of students. In that study it was suggested that students with severe disabilities who were integrated should be making academic gains which are at least equal to those made in a more restrictive setting. Schloss (1992) has suggested that students should be meeting at least 75% of their goals and objectives and that general education teachers should continue to make modifications in their approaches if students are not meeting this criterion.

Probably the most often noted approach for helping students with disabilities succeed in general education classes is the Adaptive Learning Environments Model (Wang 1980). This model provides adapted learning experiences based on student differences and is designed for the general education classroom. Although I do not have time to share all the components of the model here I will briefly share the philosophy of this approach: 1) full integration of students which provides equal access to instructional resources and an equal opportunity to succeed; 2) all students learn in different ways and require varying amounts of instruction and time; 3) services are delivered in the general classroom with a focus on intervention rather than placement - services are integrated; and 4) adaptive instruction requires the use of a variety of instructional methods and learning experiences.

The ALEM approach has been shown to work with students who have mild and moderate disabilities (Wang, Peverly, & Randolph, 1984). But in this study Wang noted that special education students still did not achieve at the same rate as the other students in the classrooms.

We also have evidence that by structuring classrooms in a manner that facilitates meeting the demands placed by students with disabilities is also at least as effective as resource rooms. Affleck et al, (1988) presented research concerning the effectiveness of what has become known as the Integrated Classroom. This model uses teachers who have special education training, reduces class size, and provides para-professional

assistance to the teacher. The model also insures that students with disabilities are completely included into the classroom, the majority of the teacher's time is spent on instruction,there is at least a 2-to-1 ratio of positive to negative comments from the teacher; and materials are adapted by the teacher for individual instruction. Using these approaches teachers are able to effectively educate classes which are up to 1/3 students with disabilities.

In individual general classrooms for the success of integrated students with disabilities the following approaches are found in various combinations. According to Schlosss, (1992) and others noted previously:

1. Cooperative learning and peer tutoring strategies
2. Para-professional assistance
3. Home-classroom coordination
4. Special motivational approaches
5. Improved time management by the teacher
6. Environmental adaptations (technology, prosthetics, revised instructional groupings, proximity control).
7. Curricular modifications (learning strategies, test taking skills, social skills instruction, listening & note taking skills, memory skills).
8. Modified teaching strategies (ABA, prompting strategies, questioning approaches).
9. Consultation & conferencing with special education & other professionals.

Falvey et al., (1989) used team teaching, where the special and general education teacher share an equal responsibility, to be a successful method of integrating students with severe disabilities. Teachers are able to learn from others and employ a wider range of strategies (Alper & Ryndak, 1992). Need for flexible grouping with the severe population was stressed by Alper & Ryndak (1992); and Harp (1989). Such groups are formed when needed and the composition is varied. Special friendships are also effective in increasing the quality of life for students with severe disabilities (Strully & Strully, 1989). These are planned and facilitated friends or buddies which develop into reciprocal relationships.

When total schools or school districts make a commitment to integration and bring together resources from special education, Title I, and other categorical programs have shown success. The Hiawatha Elementary project in Minneapolis reported by Self, et al., (1991) is an example. This program addressed the problems of low achievement across the school setting. Used was a comprehensive building-wide approach with

special and compensatory education acting as support for the regular education teachers. The program used supplemental periods of special assistance during the week and used a weekly monitoring process. The project showed gains which were termed significant in the area of reading achievement. Jenkins et al., (1991) reported a similar process of restructuring the delivery of services in a study that compared two schools in the Seattle area. In this study they used an integrated language arts program, in-class assistance of specialists and cross age tutoring. I point these out not because they are exceptional examples of integration but because it is typical of programs operating throughout the country and they represent the general use of effective practices to support integration of students.

A recent study, Jenkins, et al., (1994) validated what we in special education have felt was effective for some time. The use of cross class and cross grade grouping plans along with peer assistance through cooperative learning arrangements, and by providing additional practice opportunities through peer tutoring has been shown to be effective (Jenkins, et al., 1994). But even in that study they found a percentage of students who failed using standard classroom practices and needed direct intensive specialized programs of approximately 20 per minutes per day. This is similar to other studies (e.g. Pinnell, 1989; Salvin et al., 1990).

Finally, Bogin (1991) reported their center provided IEPs for all students. This insured individualization in the classroom. The major findings that arise out of district wide inclusion are:

1) the providing of help to all who need it.

2) the blurring of "who kids belong to"

3) changes in the level and ability to individualize.

4) modification of the general climate relating to differences.

Social/Friendship Issues

Once again Hilton and Liberty (1991) and Schloss (1992) have pointed out the need to evaluate the social gains of students once they are placed in a more integrated setting. Schloss (1992) also pointed out the importance of the teacher making interventions/ changes in teaching approaches to insure social gains of students.

Jenkins, et al.,(1989) and Cole, et al., (1991) both found that if social interaction is to occur at acceptable rates the teacher must structure and direct the social integration experiences as opposed to leaving these options to the children.

The importance of positive corrective feedback was found in a study by Larrivee and Horne (1991). They pointed out that when students were given a second chance to

respond after the provision of some guidance or clarification this helped with self esteem and peer acceptance.

Disruption to the Teacher and Other Students

There appears to be no research on the level of disruption to the learning of other students or the level of demand required by students being integrated into general classrooms. Although Affleck, et al., (1988) in presenting research concerning the effectiveness of what has become known as the Integrated Classroom, did provide some evidence for the need to reduce class size if students are to be successful in integrated classrooms.

Cost

Schloss (1992) has stated one of the questions that should be asked when students are re-integrated into general education classrooms is whether resources are adequate to carry out the appropriate educational tasks defined above and in the IEP.

Although there have been attempts at evaluation of the benefit cost of special education put forward earlier (Lewis, 1988), no evaluation of the costs of integration/inclusionary programs has taken place. The only statement that has emerged from the evaluation of inclusionary practices was from Jenkins (1994) and was noted above. Basically it was pointed out that it will require more resource, i.e., more cost, to support the appropriate integration of students with disabilities.

Conclusion

Fuchs, Fuchs, & Fernstrom (1992) have called for what they call "responsible re-integration" of students with disabilities. This is a case-by-case approach to integrating students into general education. Fuchs & Fuchs (1994) have also pointed out that there is evidence that the problem in the system is not with special education (unless it is our willingness to take in any and all students) but with general education's ". . . lack of will and capacity to accommodate more of its students." (p. 295)

There are several issues which are critical to making integration work. The first is the insuring that the established best practices of the field of mental retardation follow students with disabilities no matter where they are placed (Bates, Renzalia and Wehman, 1981; Hilton, Faught, & Hagen, 1984; Snell, 1988; Williams, Fox, Thousand & Fox, 1990). These 8 to 10 practices have a level of consensus in the field. They include concepts like Age Appropriate Placement, Integration Practices, Appropriate Curriculum, Specific Instructional Strategies, Systematic/Data Based, Programming based on Individual Needs of the Students, Family Involvement and Integrated Services.

The second issue is the need for ongoing monitoring of progress of students in general education placements. Hilton & Liberty (1991) have provided a two part test for evaluating the placement of students integrated into general education. This is the evaluation of both academic and social gains with emphasis on the fact that students should be making equal or better progress in the general education classroom than they did in the more segregated setting. Academic gains can be monitored by the use of curriculum referenced assessment and any measures built into the IEP. Social gains or the non-academic gains again should be measured through statements contained in the IEP, but beyond this, Storey (1993) has proposed a variety of measures to facilitate physical and social integration along with relationship and social networks developed. Hilton & Liberty (1991) used questionnaires and structured observations to determine the level of social integration that severely handicapped students had gained. Storey (1993) has stressed importance of monitoring progress in all domains in his article on assessing integration. Further, placements should reflect planning based on needs of the student (e.g., Davern & Schnorr, 1991), specifics of the classroom, and skills and/or attitudes of the teacher. Without these considerations the percentage of success will be diminished. Beyond this it seems clear that all four areas covered in the Holland Case should be monitored.

For integration or if we must call it inclusion to work it must be planned based on the needs of the individual student and the process must monitor the student's progress in all areas. Beyond this we need to evaluate the progress of other students in the same classroom, attend to the need for teacher support and be aware of cost factors. Best practices need to follow students with mental retardation no matter where they are educated. If these things are done we can successfully integrate students with mental retardation into general education classrooms.

Let's hope that we view each child as an individual, and that we place and support these students based on specific needs. Full inclusion is a philosophy: for it to be implemented in a manner that all students will benefit to the fullest we must plan and support the integration of students with mental retardation and other disabilities. We must use what works, validate promising practices and monitor the integration efforts concerning academic and social gains; the disruption to other students and the teachers; and examine the cost of the process. If we do those things we will make integration work for the students who should be integrated.

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